

THE SANDPIPER.

Across the narrow beach we sit,
One little sandpiper and I,
And fast I lean my head on his,
The watered driftwood bleached and dry.
The wild waves reach their hands for it,
The wild wind raves, the tide runs high.
As up and down the beach we sit—
One little sandpiper and I.

When our heads the sullen clouds
Shed black and swift across the sky,
Like silent boats in misty shrouds,
Stand out the white, lit houses high.
Almost as far as eye can reach
I see the glass-roofed mansions fly.
As fast we sit along the beach—
One little sandpiper and I.

I watch him as he skims alone,
Utters his sweet and mournful cry.
He starts not at my fitful song,
Or flash of fluttering drapery.
He has no thought of any wrong,
He seems no with a fearless eye.
Staunch friends are we, well tried and strong,
The little sandpiper and I.

—Gaila Thacker

Lady Latimer's Escape.

BY CHARLOTTE M. BRAEMER.

CHAPTER III—CONTINUED.

"You might be tempted some day," she said. "You are beautiful enough, and you have a chance all your own."

When the loaded storm broke furiously, my drift-wood fire will burn so bright! To what warm shelter couldst thou fly? I do not fear for thee, though wroth the tempest rushes through the sky. For we are not God's children here.

When Lady Latimer and I had been together a few hours, she laughed heartily and naturally as I did. We went over the whole house, and its extent, its magnificence, completely astonished me. It was like unraveling a fairy tale, but I saw that this alone would not make any one happy.

I remember that in the library there was a very beautiful picture; it was of a young man, quite young, not more than twenty years of age, wearing the picturesque uniform of the Life Guards. A face that attracted and charmed me, for it had the dark, chivalrous beauty of the knights of old—dark, luminous eyes full of fire and courage, dark, level brows that nearly met, a proud, firm mouth, half covered with a dark moustache, such a face as one sees in the pictures of Spanish knights and princes, yet with a gleam of human tenderness in the eyes that arrested you, and made you stand still before it.

"Who is that, Lady Latimer?" I asked. "Is it the portrait of a person living, or—"

"Dead," in conjunction with that beautiful, noble face.

"Living," she replied. "Now, Audrey, who is that? Try to guess."

I could not for I knew nothing of the Latimers, except that they existed, and I told her so. She was looking at the picture with smiling eyes.

"That is Lionel Fleming," she said, "heir-at-law and next of kin to Lord Latimer."

I knew as little of the laws of entail as I did of Greek. I looked up at her quite puzzled.

"He is Lord Latimer's son," I said.

She laughed.

"No, he is but very distantly related to him," she answered; "but, for all that, when the present Lord Latimer dies, Lionel Fleming will succeed him, and become Baron Latimer, of Lorton's Cray."

inal. He was coming in September, and doubtless we should be invited to Lorton's Cray. Then I took myself to task for wasting time in thinking of a picture and a name.

CHAPTER IV.

Dinner that evening was a stately, ceremonious affair, unutterably solemn and dull. The earl presided in great state. Everything was of the rarest and best, but dull and cheerless. Lady Latimer's eyes looked at me as though she would say, "Let us make haste and get it over and get away again." I could imagine what those dinners were like when she was quite alone with the old lord.

She was quite a different Lady Latimer then. It seemed as though all the brightness and the sparkle died out of her. She looked bored by everything. She ate little and drank less. She looked unutterably wearied. Very few words were spoken, and it was a great relief when we withdrew. We went to the drawing-room, where the lamps were lighted, but not turned on full.

"Come, Audrey, to the terrace," she said, "and let us see the May moon shining over the trees, and the fountains."

As we stood watching it she suddenly caught my hand, and with a passionate gesture I shall never forget, she cried:

"Oh, Audrey, Audrey! is life worth living after all?"

I was very much puzzled by Lady Latimer. It seemed to me that having so much money, living in such a magnificent house, the face of being surrounded by every possible luxury under the sun, ought to have made her at least content. If she had passed through those magnificent rooms with a smile or a snatch of song on her lips, or the light of a glad content in her eyes, I could have understood. She seemed to have two moods. When she was with the old lord, silence, weariness, with a certain fine scorn of all and everything; when she was with me, of simple, almost child-like merriment. When it was possible for her to escape the stately, gloomy presence of her husband, she did so, and then it was to hurry to me and beg that I would go out with her; and when we were in the woods together she forgot that she was Lady Latimer, and ran after butterflies, gathered wild flowers like any simple country girl. We spent hours in those sunny Lorton woods. They were like fairy-land. The boughs of the trees met overhead, so that the sunlight which fell on the green grass below became filtered, as it were, through the leaves; a beautiful brook ran through the wood, singing, rippling, clear as crystal, so that one could see the pebbles plainly in its bed; blue forget-me-nots grew on its banks, and the green grass was wet with the shining water. The trees in Lorton woods were strong and tall, with great spreading boughs, and the birds had built nests in them. Surely no other wood or forest ever held so many birds, and surely no other birds ever sung so sweetly as these. Every kind of fern and of wild flower grew there; great sheaves of bluebells, of wild strawberry blossoms, and of the lovely, delicate meadow-sweet. It was a wood full of hidden beauties; we were always finding fresh nooks and corners, each one more beautiful than the other. Lady Latimer loved it. We sat for hours together by the side of the brook, talking on every possible subject except one. We never spoke of herself. I had to go over and over again all the details and routine of our home life. Lady Latimer loved to hear of my father's study and his sermons, and how he visited the sick, and how nervous he was if a baby cried while he was baptizing it; how he cheered the old people, and how kind he was to the young men and maidens of his parish; how he loved the boys, and secretly enjoyed the fun of them. She liked to hear about my mother.

"I should think, Audrey," she said to me one day, "from your description, that your mother must be that wonder of wonders—a perfect woman. She is a saint in church, a help in the study, a manager in the kitchen, a mother in the nursery and a lady in the drawing-room."

"She is all that," I answered laughing, although my eyes were full of tears; that was my mother's portrait to perfection.

Lady Latimer liked best of all to hear about the boys; their adventures, their escapades, their desperate encounters, their daily deadly peril of life and limb, amused her more than anything else. She would talk to me of myself, and what would be my probable fate. I could see nothing before me but a few more quiet years at home, then probably a marriage with a high churchman; but Lady Latimer would laugh and assure me there was something more than that in store for me.

"We shall see what those dark eyes and that dark hair of yours will do for you, Audrey," she would say. For my own part, I could not imagine why nature made the oldest of nine children and the daughter of a country vicar beautiful.

During all of those long hours, when life at that vicarage was dissected and laid bare, no word was ever spoken of herself or of Lord Latimer. The

longer I remained with them, the greater grew my wonder that she had married him. He was so old, so dull, so gloomy; she so young, so fair, so gay. But no allusion to her marriage ever crossed her lips or mine. I enjoyed my visit. I loved Lady Latimer; everything and every one was pleasant and agreeable to me, and when the time of my visit ended, I returned to the vicarage. I should like to describe that first night of mine at home—how the boys surrounded me, and would insist upon every detail, the most absorbing of which were what I had to eat and to drink. Their eyes opened widely at the history of one of the dinners at Lorton's Cray. Charley, who was always suspected of being a gourmand, cried ecstatically, "I wish I had been there!" The result of our conversation was an anxious inquiry as to whether Lady Latimer meant to invite them, and when I told them that she had even fixed on a day, their delight knew no bounds.

I was not much surprised a few days afterward, to find Lord Latimer in my father's study, and he had come with a request, a petition, a prayer from Lady Latimer. It was that I might go and live with her entirely. She found herself lonely, and when she was lonely she was not well. There was a grave consultation between my parents. My mother said how useful I was to her, and how much she should miss my help among the children and in the house. My father said that he had never anticipated any of his daughters leaving home, but the stipend offered, a hundred and fifty pounds per annum, was a large one, and would be a great help with the number of children and the small income. My dear mother argued that I should be able to spare at least one hundred for the use of those at home.

At last it was decided. My father held out the longest; his pride was touched at the thought that one of his daughters should have to leave home. But even that yielded before the thought of the comfort that that additional hundred per annum would give him.

There was dismay and dread among the boys; there was, in fact, a revolution. Why should Audrey; their own sister and special friend, go away from them to live with Lady Latimer? It was not fair, and they decided in their own especial parlance "not to stand it." Their sister belonged to them, and not to Lady Latimer. They wished now that she had never come to Lorton's Cray. They wanted Audrey for themselves. The dear, gentle mother listened in patience. Then she explained to them the great advantages that must be derived from another hundred per annum, and what a nice thing it would be for me to be always well dressed, and meeting people who moved in high society.

"We are high society, mother," said Bob, reproachfully. "There is no better than you and my father."

My mother kissed him in her quiet, gentle fashion.

"It will be best, my dear," she said. And then the boys knew that their plan of action had failed.

There was only one comfort for them: living at Lorton's Cray, forming one of that most august household, I should be able to obtain some indulgences for them, such as an occasional ride or drive; and afterward both Lord and Lady Latimer proved very kind in this respect. They were kind altogether; great hamper of game and fruit went from the hall to the vicarage; great parcels of toys came for the boys, but the privilege of riding was the one they valued most.

So it came about that I was installed at Lorton's Cray as a companion to its mistress, with a salary of one hundred and fifty per annum, and a nice room of my own. I thought myself the most fortunate of girls.

And now I come to the heart of my story. I had left the simple, happy home of my youth. I was in a new world and a new sphere of life. I must add this one remark while speaking of myself: I was just eighteen, but like many oldest daughters of large families, I was much older than my years. I had, it seemed to me, passed through the experience of a lifetime, and I believe most oldest daughters have the same feeling.

From the moment I entered the house until the strange events happened which close my story, Lady Latimer clung to me with wonderful love. She seemed to rely on me, to trust me. She never liked to have me out of her sight. No sister ever cared for another as she did for me.

I remember one bright June morning she was standing on the lawn looking some tame doves. The sunlight lay on her golden hair, her white dress, and the cluster of roses at her throat; a picture far as the day itself. There was a dreamy sadness in her exquisite face. She left the pretty birds, and stood looking over the square of lawn towards the beautiful silver spray rose high in the air.

I went up to her. Her eyes were a dreamy, far-off look that I have never seen in any other face.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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